

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 173

EA 013 429

AUTHOR Clark, David L.; Carroll, Mary P.
TITLE Relationships of NIE-Sponsored Regional Institutions to Other Educational Institutions.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Oct 80
CONTRACT NIE-P-80-0082
NOTE 69p.: Some tables may reproduce poorly due to small print of original document. For related documents, see EA 013 430-433.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Intermediate Administrative Units; Planning; Public Agencies; *Regional Cooperation; *Regional Laboratories; *Research and Development Centers; School Districts; State Departments of Education
IDENTIFIERS *Knowledge Production and Utilization; National Institute of Education

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a variety of perspectives that can be used to consider the question of the relationships that are likely to develop between each new National Institute of Education (NIE) sponsored regional institution and other educational institutions in its region. Three broad logical structures that may help illuminate the question are examined. The first is regionalism. The examination of regionalism includes a review of types of regional institutions and of varying definitions of regionality. The second is the configuration perspective, which presents a view of the interrelationships of knowledge production and utilization (KPU) agencies in education. The third is alternative perspectives on organizing: this structure presents an examination of the research literature on organizations that challenges traditional, bureaucratic organizational models. The implications of the alternative perspectives on organizing for the management function of planning are examined. The major agencies functioning in educational KPU, their primary activities in the field, and their likely interactions with an NIE-sponsored regional organization are also studied. Finally, some recommendations based on this analysis are presented. (Author/IRT)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED196173

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

RELATIONSHIPS
cf
NIE-SPONSORED REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS
to
OTHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

October, 1980

David L. Clark
Mary R. Carroll

The work upon which this document is based was performed pursuant to Contract No. NIE-P-80-0082 of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however, necessarily reflect the views of that agency.

EA 013 429

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1-1
Defining an NIE-sponsored Regional Institution	1-2
Prospectus	1-4
Perspectives for Viewing Regional Institutional Relationships	2-1
Regionalism	2-1
Configurational Perspective	2-5
Organizations and Organizing	2-10
Nature of goals	2-10
Negotiating the order	2-11
Loosely coupled systems	2-12
Interorganizational relationships	2-13
Planning	2-14
Planning as a "natural" function	2-14
Planning in a futurist image	2-15
Levels of planning	2-15
Products of planning	2-17
Summary and Conclusions	2-17
Profiling Regional Educational Agencies	3-1
An Inventory and Demography	3-2
Local education agencies	3-2
Intermediate service agencies	3-8
State education agencies	3-9
Schools, colleges, and departments of education	3-10
Private KPU agencies	3-11

Table of Contents (continued)

	Page
Publicly-supported KPU agencies	3-11
Professional education associations	3-12
Interorganizational arrangements	3-13
Analysis of KPU Functions by Educational Agencies	3-14
Needs assessment	3-19
Solution exploration	3-20
Collaborative planning	3-21
R and D based services	3-22
Dissemination	3-22
Training programs	3-23
National functions	3-23
Conclusions and Inferences	3-24
Summary and Recommendations	4-1
Summary	4-1
Recommendations	4-3
On planning and plans	4-3
In the process of procurement	4-5
In monitoring/operations	4-6
In general	4-6
References	5-1
Reference Notes	5-2

They had come into the diocese cold . . . with nothing but the Bishop's permission to sustain them. The lower clergy, after welcoming them with all the lukewarmness at their command, had closed ranks and hardened at the prospect of being regarded by their own flocks as less traveled, less learned, and less spiritual than the newcomers.

J. F. Powers in Morte D'Urban

Introduction

Existing NIE-sponsored regional institutions have evolved through a fifteen year period of inconstant policy statements, rules and regulations, and patterns of reinforcement from their prime sponsor. The emphases have vacillated so turbulently that not only substantive and functional emphases changed but the very concept of "regionality" lost its meaning. The number of regional educational laboratories dwindled from 20 institutions serving the entire country to eight laboratories covering widely varying regions of the country with different levels of "service" and/or school improvement capacity. In fact, there are a number of areas with no designated service from laboratories and many areas which have only token contact with these institutions.

Unsurprisingly, organizations functioning under such conditions of environmental uncertainty responded in markedly different ways, emphasizing different functions, and developing different relationships with their designated regions. Surprisingly, if one places high credibility in the efficacy of rational planning processes (less surprisingly if one views organizations from a natural selection perspective), the eight surviving laboratories and their sister R and D centers were characterized by the Panel for The Review of Laboratory and Center Operations as:

a vigorous set of research and development institutions doing work of quality and significance for American education. . . . the experience of the last 15 years has affirmed the need for R and D centers and strengthened the rationale for regional educational laboratories. (Final Report of the Panel for The Review of Laboratory and Center Operations, 1979, p. iv.)

Defining an NIE-sponsored Regional Institution

In the case of the eight more or less mature laboratories that have experienced the historical development of the past 15 years, they can be described empirically and defined in a more or less arbitrary fashion based on that description. The Panel for the Review of Laboratory and Center Operations felt that they could distinguish between R and D centers and regional educational laboratories in a general way and found "virtue in maintaining the distinction between the purposes of laboratories and centers" (1979, p. iv.). They proposed the following distinction:

Laboratories, in contrast, [to R and D centers] should address a larger spectrum of educational problems. These problems will be defined by their regional constituents. In pursuit of their priorities, laboratories are likely to engage in a mix of applied research, development, evaluation, technical assistance, and dissemination activities. (p. iv.)

This definition is obviously imperfect as a description of the current set of eight institutions; and the Panel warned against interpreting slavishly any definition of the existing institutions and their functions. However, no such constraint need be observed in projecting a picture of what a non-existent, new regional institution might become. The authors intend to portray what might be described as an "ideal type" regional institution based on the report of the 1979 Panel and several NIE documents which have succeeded that report. The purpose for describing this hypothetical organization is simply to establish a set of constant purposes and functions for analysis in this paper. We assume that NIE will be flexible in allowing submitters to modify their emphases on functions to fit their staff strengths and regional contexts.

With that caution in mind, following are the purposes and functions of this "idealized" regional institution:

Purposes. Regional education laboratories . . . are designed to:

- identify concerns and priorities through regionally representative governing and advisory structures and activities that help the regional clientele define their needs;
- conduct applied research and development in pursuit of those priorities;
- provide technical assistance to the region;
- facilitate communication among agencies and individuals;
- promote the use in the region of R and D results from all sources; and
- disseminate the results of their own R and D on a national basis. (1979, p. 8)

Institutional Functions. For regional educational laboratories, institutional functions include:

- needs assessment and the identification and clarification of problems in the laboratory's region;
- provision of R & D-based services to practitioners in the laboratory's region, stimulating or sponsoring R & D by other performers where appropriate;
- maintenance of strong and broadly representative constituent governance and advisory structures;
- exploratory R & D to develop approaches to solving the region's educational problems;
- dissemination (defined broadly to include activities that enhance the impact of the laboratory's and others' R & D);
- collaborative planning with other R & D performers and NIE staff;
- assistance to NIE through pursuit of mutually defined short term activities;
- institutional development through visiting scholar programs and staff development activity;
- sponsorship of training programs;
- institutional self-evaluation. (p. 25)

The currency, and we have assumed the consensus, represented by these depictions of ideal regional institutions is attested to by their adoption, almost verbatim, in the final version of NIE's administrative policy and procedure statement of January 15, 1979 entitled "Long-term Special Institutional Agreements with the Seventeen Existing Laboratories and Centers" (Note 1, pp. 2-3 and 4-5), and in the more recent NIE discussion document,

"Should NIE Establish New Regional R and D Institutions" (1980). We will assume for analytic purposes that the question of purposes and functions for proposed new institutions will correspond to the ideal type described in NIE's publications at least until convincing evidence is produced through regional discussions or by regional proposers to modify that view.

Prospectus

The remainder of this paper will attempt to offer a variety of perspectives which can be used to consider the question of the relationships which are likely to develop between new NIE-sponsored regional institutions and other educational institutions in the region designated for the new agency. Section 2 will consider briefly three broad logical structures which may illuminate the question, i.e.:

1. Regionalism--a brief review of types of regional institutions and varying definitions of regionality.
2. The configurational perspective--a view of the interrelationship of knowledge production and utilization (KPU) agencies in education.
3. Alternative perspectives on organizing--an examination of the research and literature on organizations which challenges traditional, bureaucratic organizational models.
4. Changing images of planning--the implications of the alternative perspectives on organizing for the management function of planning.

In Section 3 we will profile the major agencies functioning in educational KPU, their primary activities in the field, and their likely interactions with an NIE-sponsored regional organization.

Finally, we will generate some recommendations based on this analysis, addressing procurement, monitoring, and operating relationships.

Perspectives for Viewing Regional Institutional Relationships

The intent of this section is to provide the reader with several different logical structures through which regional institutions and their interorganizational relationships might be viewed, perhaps better understood. We will begin with the concept of regionalism itself and move then to the configurational perspective (a structure designed specifically for viewing the educational KPU community). The third structure is broader in scope, challenging traditional views of organizations and organizing. Finally, one management function, planning, will be discussed in light of newer perspectives on organizations.

Regionalism¹

The designation of the new institutions to be sponsored by NIE as "regional institutions" is, at first glance, a meaningful distinction. It places these new institutions in a category of organizations already familiar to, and presumably understood by, the educational community engaged in KPU, i.e., the current regional educational laboratories. It calls to mind other regional programs and organizations which have been established by the Federal government. However, closer examination of the meaning of the term regional, and of the specific functions assigned to the new regional institutions, raises questions about the meaning of the term as it is being applied to these new institutions.

In considering regionality, characteristics important either to the demarcation of a region or to the designation of roles and interorganizational

¹ A paper on regionalism as it applies to the Research and Development Exchange authored by H. Durward Hofler (Hofler, H. D. An overview perspective on regionalism. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Education, 1979) was used in preparing this section.

relationships for regional organizations include at least the following:

1. Basis for regionality

- Indigenous - a geographic area, identifiable because of documental and/or emotive attributes that cause people to perceive it as being somehow different from the geography that surrounds it.
- Exogenous - a geographic area, arbitrarily defined for administrative or political convenience.

2. Role of the regional organization

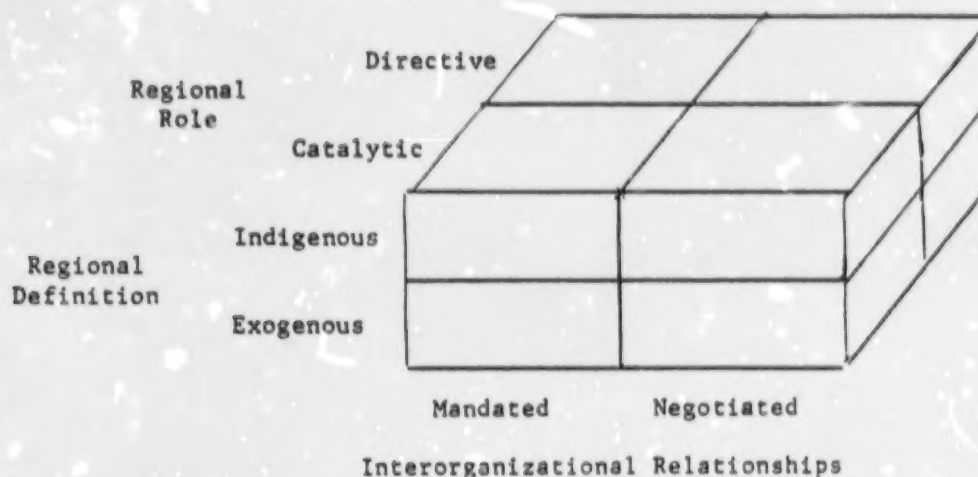
- Directive - the organization is expected to exercise some coordinative, administrative or programmatic responsibility in the region.
- Catalytic - the organization is expected to function in a responsive, stimulatory or cooperative role in the region.

3. Interorganizational relationships

- Mandated - substantively relevant organizations are either required to enter legally into some relationship with the regional organization or programmatic funding is dependent upon entering an interorganizational relationship with the regional organization.
- Negotiated - substantively relevant organizations will enter into relationships with the regional organization if they decide that such a relationship is in their self interest.

The hypothetical relationships among these three variables are depicted in Figure 2-A.

Figure 2-A
Variables Defining Key Aspects of Regionality



A wide variety of regional organizational types can be generated using Figure 2-A although from a practical point of view, certain of the cells are infrequent, e.g., directive - negotiated, catalytic - mandated. For the purposes of this discussion, however, it will be noted that the most common image of regional organizations centers on an indigenously defined organization, having a directive regional role that is involved in mandated interorganizational relationships. Clearly, the common definition does not apply to the new regional institutions. Rather, they fall at the opposite end of the definitional continuum. They exist in exogenously defined regions, serve in catalytic roles and will become involved in interorganizational relationships to the extent that they are successful in negotiating such relationships.

Consideration of the existing regional educational laboratories or the proposed new regional institutions demonstrates that their geographic regionality is, in most cases, arbitrary - would be defined as exogenous. If it

were not for the fact that the boundaries of the region were recorded at NIE, many of these regions would never be considered a regional entity, e.g., the area assigned to CEMREL. AEL, on the other hand, conforms more nearly to the indigenous classification of regionalism. The functions assigned to the regional institutions do not provide a basis for any existing educational KPU organizations to assume that they will be affiliated regularly or even sporadically with the regional institution. These affiliations will have to be negotiated organization by organization around specific projects or activities. Actually, there are no obvious benefits or decrements for educational KPU organizations in the region to consider in regard to affiliation with the regional institution. The educational KPU roles of the new regional institutions will overlap in most respects with the KPU roles and activities that are ongoing among educational KPU organizations in all areas of the country. And, of course, there are no hierarchical or authority relationships between the regional organization and its institutional colleagues in the region. The new institution's role is certainly catalytic rather than directive.

All of this is not to say that the proposed institutions have no regional focus but rather that (1) they are likely to be working in a synthetic region, (2) with an ambiguous role to play, (3) interacting with a heterogeneous group of existing agencies, (4) on problems and through processes which will frequently be of interest to small sub-sets of the region. They can hardly be compared in resources, authority, role, or responsibility to a regional agency such as a TVA or even an area agency on the aging.

The experience of the NIE with the development of the existing regional educational laboratories as depicted in the final report of the Panel for the

Review of Laboratory and Center Operations has been marked by evolving diversity among the laboratories. In recounting the history of the regional laboratories and endorsing the current level of development and activity of the remaining laboratories, the Panel, in effect, recognized that their success might be explained as either the survival of the fittest or a series of historical accidents. In a study of other Federal efforts to establish regional organizations Derthick (1974) found that attempts to develop a number of organizations patterned on a single regional prototype had not been successful. The experience of the regional educational laboratories reflects this conclusion. Successful regionalism is the product of a confluence of opportunities, individual characteristics, timing, location, and the unknown. In the case of the NIE-sponsored regional institutions it will also be dependent on a realistic view of the scope of this intervention.

The Configurational Perspective²

The tendency of observers of the relationships among organizations engaged in educational knowledge production and utilization (KPU) has been to think of these organizations as members of a system or, at least, to wish that they were a system. It will be contended here that such a view is unrealistic and, if used by the new regional institutions in discovering their niche in their regions, will have detrimental effects on developing the new regional institutions as viable KPU organizations.

The nature of the educational KPU environment into which the new regional institutions will be inserted is depicted by the configurational perspective

² This section draws heavily from Guba, E. G. and Clark, D. L. The configurational perspective: A view of educational knowledge production and utilization. Washington, D. C.: Council for Educational Development and Research, Inc., 1974.

as constituting a community of organizations as opposed to an organized KPU system. This suggests that the KPU environment is one that will be continuously emergent and not one that the new regional institution will ever define or control. There are several ideas basic to the configurational view of the educational KPU community that should stimulate a flexible attitude on the part of the NIE and the new regional institution as it begins to work at discovering the nature of the context in which it will be operating. These include the following:

- Educational organizations engaged in KPU are essentially independent of one another. No binding authority exists. If an organization is interested in cooperative KPU activity with another organization, it must rely on its ability to persuade that organization that participation is in its best interests.
- The consequence of this independence is that many of the organizations have overlapping KPU roles.
- Competition is the basic relationship. Cooperation is rare except in the form of temporary alliances.
- The overwhelming majority of the organizations and individuals tend to view KPU activity as subordinate to their primary activities.
- Regularized function flow across organizational boundaries does not exist. KPU exists as a cottage industry.

There are a number of characteristics of the community of educational organizations engaged in KPU that have implications for the new regional institution as it tries to establish relations with educational organizations in its region. These are presented in Table 2-B.

Table 2-B

Implications of the Configurational Perspective for New Regional Institutions and
Their Relationships With Other Educational Organizations

KPU Community Factor	Configurational View	Implications for Action
1. Structure	Decentralized	Most KPU activity will occur close to the point of effective action, i.e., away from the regional institution.
2. Functions	Independent, Disconnected, Loosely connected	An integrated, cohesive and logically ordered set of regional KPU activities will not exist and will be impossible to initiate. Attention should be directed toward supporting and improving function performance in situ.
3. Roles	Overlapping	Educational organizations tend to emphasize some KPU roles but they are inconsistent in their emphasis and the intra-group role variance is high.
4. Agency Status	Co-equal	No KPU agency is in a position to assume directive control of KPU activities in a state or region. Each educational organization considers itself to be an autonomous entity free to decide whether cooperative or collaborative KPU activities are of interest.

Table 2-B (continued)

Implications of the Configurational Perspective for New Regional Institutions and
Their Relationships With Other Educational Organizations

KPU Community Factor	Configurational View	Implications for Action
5. Goal Orientation	Emergent, Idiosyncratic	As the environment changes, perceived needs emerge, opportunities present themselves, and personnel change, the goals of any KPU organization will shift resulting in constant flux in the nature of the KPU community. Individuals in the same agency frequently pursue KPU goals which are of little interest to the agency as a whole.
6. KPU Orientation	Peripheral for most Central for a few	Most educational KPU organizations will have a set of dominant non-KPU goals. These will interfere with the organization's ability and willingness to participate in KPU activities and will foster the fluid participation of organizations in KPU activities.
7. Authority- Responsibility	Negotiated	The nature of the relationship between educational organizations in the KPU community are negotiated on a relationship by relationship basis. The new organization knows it will be a negotiator frequently and an arbiter occasionally.

Table 2-B (continued)

Implications of the Configurational Perspective for New Regional Institutions and
Their Relationships With Other Educational Organizations

KPU Community Factor	Configurational View	Implications for Action
8. Motivation	Intrinsic	KPU organizations become involved in KPU activity that is of inherent interest to them or their membership. Efforts to purchase their interest typically produce short term relationships.
9. Institutional Behavior	Transactional	Relations among KPU organizations are frequently based on person to person or subunit to subunit relations that are negotiated in areas of common or mutual interest. Inter-organizational arrangements are often inter-personal arrangements.
10. Interaction	Symbiotic, Temporary	KPU organizations will interact when each organization perceives the other as supplying necessary resources or assistance. Interaction will cease when these perceptions no longer exist.

The overall thrust of the configurational perspective is that educational organizations engaged in KPU are independent, self-interested, and selectively attentive to KPU activities beyond their own boundaries. In light of this, new regional institutions would be well advised to adopt non-intrusive, flexible, and sensitive attitudes and approaches to the regional environments in which they will be established.

Organizations and Organizing³

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of new understandings about the nature of organizations and their processes. These new views have challenged the traditional bureaucratic, rationalistic view of the organization and its processes. They have raised questions about the role of goals for organizations, the roles of individual organizational members, and the degree to which an organization is a tightly coupled, coordinated entity. A number of the ideas expressed in these emerging views have significance for the new regional organizations as they work to become established members of the educational KPU community.

The nature of goals. Classical organizational theory views goals as the focal point around which organizational activity is planned. Organizations are, after all, goal attaining entities. Quality control systems assess the extent to which organizational processes further goal attainment. Alternative views contend that organizational goals do not have this primacy for organizational members or the nature of organizational activities, e.g.:

The common assertion that goal consensus must occur prior to action obscures the fact that consensus is impossible unless there is something tangible around which it can occur. And this "something tangible" may well turn out to be actions already completed. Thus

³ This section draws heavily from Clark, D. L. and Carroll, M. R. (eds.) Alternative perspectives for viewing educational organizations. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory, 1980. (in press)

it is entirely possible that goal statements are retrospective rather than prospective. (Weick, 1979, p. 18)

In the case of the new regional organizations this suggests such alternatives as: (1) assessing what other NIE-sponsored regional organizations have been able to do well; (2) trying to link quickly to regional strengths in KPU, e.g., a strength assessment as well as a needs assessment; (3) firming up goals over time as activities are tested in the region rather than attempting to pose them a priori; (4) paying more attention to developing consensus initially around functions for the new organization; (5) emphasizing documentation and goal-free evaluation in assessing the new organization.

Negotiating the order. Some contemporary theorists posit organizations as negotiated orders. In this view, the bases for organizational action are continually being worked out by individuals, groups of individuals and groups of groups within an organization through a process of making sense of their organization and its environment. Within the context of carrying out educational KPU activities, the new regional organizations will decide to pursue certain activities in certain ways. These decisions will emerge from the juxtaposition of the interests of the various individuals who make up the organization and the perceived needs and interests of the educational KPU environment. Weick (1979) has observed that, "people notice stimuli that permit them to do what they want and/or need to do. Thus behavior can be viewed as responses in search of pretexts for expression" (p. 32). The report of the Panel reflects this observation on lab and center activities, i.e.:

While finding considerable differences among the individual centers and laboratories as to their strength and weaknesses . . . we found a vigorous set of research and development institutions doing work of quality and significance for American education. (The Panel, 1979, p. iv.)

The Panel's observation suggests that however the original goals for the labs and centers were stated, and subsequently altered, the institutions searched out an appropriate order in their respective environments. More importantly, this diversity which could never have been predicted or programmed is now a strength of the labs and centers as responsive institutions.

Loosely coupled systems. The idea of loosely coupled systems has struck a responsive chord among observers of organizations. This view asserts that organizations consist of subunits, individuals, programs, and processes that are loosely rather than tightly connected. It encompasses the following key ideas:

1. The actions of one individual or unit in an organization cannot be related reliably to the actions of another. The failure or success of one unit may not affect another.
2. Loose coupling can refer to such diverse situations as: "slack-times -- times when there is an excessive amount of resources relative to demands; occasions when any of several means will produce the same end; richly connected networks in which influence is slow to spread and/or is weak while spreading; a relative lack of coordination . . . ; a relative absence of regulations; planned unresponsiveness; actual causal independence; infrequent inspection of activities . . . ; delegation of discretion" (Weick, 1976, p. 5).
3. The adverbs occasionally, eventually, gradually, indirectly, or ceremonially can be used to characterize stimulus-response patterns when loose coupling is present (Weick, Note 2) :

Educational institutions have been noted by several observers as prototypic loosely coupled systems. The connections between the regional organizations and the institutions in their regions, among the institutions in their regions, and within these institutions will be tenuous at best, decoupled in many instances. Nothing could be more misleading than to view this world as a systemic, ordered, or responsive entity.

Interorganizational relationships. The NIE-sponsored regional organizations will live everyday in a world of interorganizational arrangements -- some caused by actions of the new organization; some existing long before the new organization was formed; some including the new organization as a participant; all complicating the organizational life of the region. Traditional theory and research about interorganizational arrangements derived from traditional organizational theory and was dominated until very recently by the exchange model (Levine and White, 1961). This model assumes a goal-oriented rational perspective in which parties in the relationship:

1. participate voluntarily;
2. perceive mutual gains or benefits from the relationship;
3. engage in the relationship in a cooperative, problem solving mode.

Alternative perspectives challenge this view. The political economy model (Benson, 1975) pictures the nature of interorganizational relationships as characterized by:

1. differential power and control exercised by the organizations in the network;
2. environmental forces and conditions that affect network relations; and
3. a form of "superstructure" of interagency sentiments and interactions which is grounded in conditions of the general political economy.

These elements in the "superstructure" seek a form of balance or equilibrium.

The dialectical model (Zeitz, 1980) takes a view quite different from either of those discussed above. The dialectical perspective asserts that:

Organizations construct major portions of their environments through the production of resources and through their control of interaction networks;

Organizational actions and interactions are channeled and constrained through structured resources and through networks of relationships;

Conflict between organizations is both system-integrative and system-disintegrative, as the resolution of old conflicts leads to generation of new ones; and

The production of interorganizational research has reactive effects on interorganizational networks. (p. 73)

Both the political economy model and the dialectical model view inter-organizational arrangements as changing, involving conflict, as requiring positive reactions at the level of individual organizational members in each organization. Either of these views appears more likely to explain relationships in the configuration of educational agencies in a region than the more classical exchange model.

Planning⁴

New perspectives on organizations and organizing suggest new views of individual management functions within organizations. Because of the pervasive quality of the planning function in the NIE-sponsored regional institutions we will note several new ways of thinking about this function which may be helpful in considering the timing, sequence, and type of planning most appropriate in these settings.

Planning as a "natural" function. The perspective of negotiated order suggests that planning is not a "synthetic" management function but an

⁴ This section draws heavily from "Understanding planning in educational organizations: Generative concepts and key variables" by L. S. Lotto, D. L. Clark, and M. R. Carroll in D. L. Clark (ed.) New perspectives on planning in educational organizations. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory, 1980. (In press)

essential part of the way in which individuals in organizations make sense of and create their organizational reality. And this is true not only of individuals within the organization but individuals normally classed as clients or collaborators. Individuals assigned formal administrative responsibilities for planning, if they are to be effective, must view themselves less as managers, initiators, and monitors and more as stimulators, facilitators, and orchestrators. An essential element in planning is missing until the organization is functioning, i.e., a priori planning for an organization is synthetic planning.

Planning in a futurist image. The traditional mindset toward planning emphasizes a form of future scanning which is wed to organizational decision making. This image of planning is so narrow that it accounts for only a small percentage of the planning activity one observes in organizational settings. Plans are frequently interpretations of past activities, e.g., rationalizing organizational successes as organizational goals, and even more often assessments of contemporary trials and errors in which the organization is engaged. As new organizations, the NIE-sponsored regional institutions will be constrained to a relatively narrow set of planning tasks until they begin operation.

Levels of planning. Again, a traditional mindset limits planning to organization-wide activity. Subunits are seen as being involved in planning at their appropriate level and feeding their plans upward to cumulate in an organization-wide plan. Because the purposes of planning at various levels vary; because sub-units in most organizations are loosely coupled in many function areas most of the time and in some function areas all of the time;

because legitimate interests of sub-groups and individuals cannot be negotiated across units in many instances without damaging institutional effectiveness; because individuals, in the final analysis, control plans, the concept of cumulative planning by levels is inappropriate for most planning ventures, most of the time. Better images of planning in and around the organization are conveyed by a range of terms such as:

1. Pervasive - the effect is of consequence on an organization-wide basis.
2. Encapsulated - the effect is of consequence only to the individual or sub-unit engaged in planning.
3. Contained - the effect is restricted, often intentionally, to a subpart of the organization, a particular function area, or a particular external constituency.
4. Spontaneous - the activity emerges, sometimes overnight, in response to a stimulus of interest to one or more institutional members, e.g., a Federal request for a proposal (RFP).
5. Continuous - units and individuals never cease the process of negotiating their preferences and activities.
6. Loosely coupled - plans may or may not intersect, cumulate, or interact across levels or between units.

If these images of planning throughout the organization seem disorderly, it is probably because planning reflects the complexity of the organization. This reflection is so cloudy and obscure prior to organizational operations that "what can be planned" is sharply delimited.

Products of planning. The primary product of organizational planning is almost never a plan. The planning process itself and its impact on the attitudes and behaviors of organizational stakeholders is frequently the most important product. But planning about a non-existent organization or sets of projected or conjectural activities almost always results in a plan represented only in a single document; and that is because such planning is basically make-believe involving a cast of characters who may be politically influential but whose stake in the organization is as yet undetermined. A priori planning almost always suffers from a model bias which emphasizes the interests of well-placed influentials.

Summary and Conclusions

The preceding perspectives have been introduced to stimulate some different ways to think about the proposed NIE-sponsored regional organizations. The authors would argue that these perspectives clarify the most likely world in which these new institutions will function. Let us recap briefly these ideas.

- The regional organizations should be thought of as educational R and D and school improvement organizational resources located in various regions of the country. In rather essential ways, these organizations differ from the traditional image of regional problem solving institutions beginning with the peculiar "regions" they represent. There is utility in supporting vigorous R and D and school improvement organizations in many parts of the United States. To imagine them, in their present state, serving regions in a systematic fashion requires more imagination than most scholars of regionalism would allow.

- Loosening the designation of regionalism may not be a bad idea solely on pragmatic grounds. The history of effective regional organizations is spotty. They are referred to by Derthick (1974) as "historical accidents." Unfortunately they seem to be accidents that are hard to repeat.

- The new organizations will confront a complicated configuration of KPU agencies in their designated regions. Keys to their success would seem to lie in the direction of building on the strengths of the configuration.
e.g.:

- Work with and support the continuation of existing decentralized school improvement activities;
- Encourage diverse educational agencies to assume and expand upon KPU roles;
- Perform a negotiator's role, assuming partnership status;
- Build relationships with institutions and individuals that participate effectively in school improvement by providing incentives appropriate to their interests;
- Work on the problems of interest to the agencies in the region.

- These new agencies are emerging organizations. Imposing tight goals and preferred processes on them will (1) exceed our current knowledge of their regions and (2) assure short falls in their evaluations. To compensate, the regional institutions will initiate a cycle of failure by attempting to impose their goals (and production goals) on other regional institutions.

- The process of building an effective regional organization within the configurational perspective is captured best by the concept of negotiated order. These new organizations can only find their way by probing, trying, experiencing, negotiating.

- Regional configurations of educational organizations are loosely coupled systems of loosely coupled systems.

- The dialectical model of interorganizational relationships reinforces the configurational view and negotiated order theory in the conclusion that NIE-sponsored regional institutions will always be organizing, never organized; always evolving, never resolved.

- Planning for these new organizations has begun already as regional interest groups have learned that NIE is contemplating the establishment of sponsored regional institutions. It will continue unabated as a responding agency is chosen and the new institution begins operation. Newer views of planning suggest (1) the demarcation among planning phases is not distinct; (2) much of the planning for the institution must await its establishment; (3) the planners will ultimately be all those interested in devoting time and energy to the institution after it begins operation.

Profiling Regional Educational Agencies

In this section we will move from macro-structures for viewing NIE-sponsored regional institutions to a more specific analysis of how these "ideal type" regional institutions can be expected to fit, or be fitted into, the midst of the on-going community of educational agencies in their region. Although it may be appropriate from a national perspective to picture regions unserved or under-served by federally sponsored regional educational institutions, these unserved regions are filled with educational agencies which are working singly and in combination to address the precise functions specified for the proposed Federal institution. The "new institution on the block" should have every reason to expect to confront overlapping service delivery agencies and territories and common resource dependency pools which will hold the possibility for direct competition, wasteful overlap, hostility, and opposition as the newly established institution searches out its role in the region.

In pursuit of the goal of reducing such potential undesirable consequences and maximizing positive regional institutional relationships, we will attempt to profile the new institution's neighborhood and what this may mean for what can or should be done by the new agency and its sponsor. A caveat: the presentation in this section will oversimplify the structure and relationships among educational institutions in a region. Only a part of the oversimplification is attributable to space limitations; some of the cause lies in the paucity of empirical information about these institutions and their activities.

An Inventory and Demography

A new NIE-sponsored regional institution will find itself working in a territory already populated by:

- Local education agencies (LEAs)
- Intermediate service agencies (ISAs)
- State education agencies (SEAs)
- Schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs)
- Private KPU agencies
- Other publicly-supported KPU agencies
- Professional education associations

and a wide variety of combinations of the above agencies which are already functioning as inter-organizational arrangements (IOAs), frequently to serve school improvement purposes in the region or sub-sections of the region.

Table 3-A characterizes these agencies (and the proposed new regional institution) on some general demographic characteristics. We will elaborate briefly on each of these agencies in the following paragraphs.

Local education agencies. The simplest way to view the LEA is as the building block for school improvement. In fact, the school or the classroom are obviously more discrete "building-blocks" but seem to be so far removed from a regional agency that they are unrealistic to discuss in direct relationship with the regional agency. The frequency of LEAs in any region probably eliminates the possibility of a regional institution working directly with these units in school improvement. The exception would be the mega-LEAs which approximate the scope of SEAs in size and influence. Most LEAs can be expected to be selfish in an enlightened sense, i.e., "we'll work with you or

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 3-A

Generic Characteristics of Educational Agencies in a Region that Affect Involvement
in KPI and School Improvement Activities

Agency Type	Characteristics					
	Number	Territorial Range	Heterogeneity	Involvement in KPI/SI	Resources for School Improvement	Centrality for School Improvement
Local education agency	High frequency; basic unit of organization.	Narrow; responsibility constrained to school district geographic boundaries.	Basic structural characteristics quite similar; however, they reflect the heterogeneity of all local governmental units.	Never a primary line function but they are the point of effective action for school improvement.	Represented chiefly in released time; needs to be justified on the basis of local improvement.	Point of effective action.
Intermediate service agency	Second in frequency to LEAs in states where they are mandated organizational forms.	Relatively narrow; responsibility covers some sub-region of a state.	Homogeneous within states; widely varying across states; non-existent in some states.	Responsibilities are diverse on an inter-state basis; some are chiefly school improvement agencies; others are solely shared service arrangements.	Those involved in school improvement might be rich resources, others would have literally no flexibility in use of personnel or budget.	In some states such agencies have been designated by the SEA as a key agency. In school improvement.

3-3

Table 1-A (continued)

Generic Characteristics of Educational Agencies in a Region That Affect Involvement
in KPU and School Improvement Activities

Agency Type	Characteristics					
	Number	Territorial Range	Heterogeneity	Involvement in KPU/SI	Resources for School Improvement	Centrality for School Improvement
State education agencies	Low frequency; even the current sprawling arrangement of regional labs has some labs dealing with as few as 3 SEAs and the upper limit currently is 8.	Relatively broad; defined by the political boundaries of the state.	Relatively homogeneous within regions; fairly clearly defined constitutional responsibilities.	Increasing involvement in SI; latter function has prospered as regulatory functions have been exercised more casually; movement has been fostered by OE/NIE developmental funds.	Good potential; some SI programs are generated directly by state legislation; flow-through (Title I) and designated (RCU) programs vest dollars at the state level.	Potentially, and actually in a few states, the keystone agency; gatekeepers in all instances; SCBP has defined a central role in dissemination for the SEA.
Schools, colleges, and departments of education	Middle range; states vary from 125+ to less than 5 based chiefly on population; most 4 year colleges have one.	Highly variable from a narrow sub-state region to a national or international audience.	Broad range; basic structural characteristics vary from a service to undergraduate students to a research program and graduate center.	Roughly 100 are heavily involved in both KP and KU; another 100-200 work regularly with local schools.	Some regular budget allocations to support KPU centers; most important resource is released time for faculty to use in KPU.	Top SCDEs are key KP agencies; all are involved in teaching teachers; a few have opted for a strong KU mission.

Table 3-A (continued)

Generic Characteristics of Educational Agencies in a Region that Affect Involvement
in KPO and School Improvement Activities

Agency Type	Characteristics					
	Number	Territorial Range	Heterogeneity	Involvement in KPO/SI	Resources for School Improvement	Centrality for School Improvement
Private KPO agencies	Any given region such as D.C., Calif., and the northeast would have only a few.	Highly variable; most important ones have national reference groups; KU-oriented agencies would be more likely to have a local or regional clientele.	Broad range; structural characteristics vary; most are fairly typified as task-bound project and consulting/training centers.	Major agencies have become a key KP and evaluation resource; few would be involved on an intra-region basis.	Resources vary depending upon contracts and grant support; larger agencies, e.g., Abt, AIR, Rand, etc. build up a resident capacity not entirely linked to current projects.	Peripheral in most regions; few have defined regional SI as a major concern or interest.
Publicly-supported KPO agencies	A number of Federally supported agencies in special fields, e.g., handicapped and vocational education.	Highly variable since the support comes from local, state, and Federal sources; in most instances the range is sub-state.	Very broad; range from a vocational education RCU in an SEA to a regional resource center for the handicapped or a residential UAF.	Highly variable; ranges from an outright service agency to a KP producer.	Resources vary depending upon the sponsor; should be considered a "good bet" to link Federal monies, at least.	Many are established to achieve school improvement ends; again the range is very great.

Table 3-A (continued)

Generic Characteristics of Educational Agencies in a Region that Affect Involvement
in KPI and School Improvement Activities

Agency Type	Characteristics					
	Number	Territorial Range	Heterogeneity	Involvement in KPI/SI	Resources for School Improvement	Centrality for School Improvement
Professional education associations	High frequency since local education associations must be included in the count; others tend to operate on a state or national basis.	Ranges from intra-LEA to national.	Very broad; even the basic membership ranges from individual to institutional.	Most assert a specific interest in SI; recent work of local education associations has moved them into at least a gatekeeper role.	With the exception of a handful of national associations, their general resource base is narrow.	Local associations are becoming more significant; national level interests are moving toward such programs as teacher centers.
Interorganizational arrangements	High frequency; a recent California study (Cates, 1980) documented over 100 in a 13 county area.	Usually a sub-state region but can vary from less than an LEA to multi-state.	Such arrangements are employed for all possible functions; tend to involve relatively small numbers of organizations (~20).	Many are designed for KPI or SI purposes; seldom used for KPI; frequently employed to non-KPI ends.	Widely varying; school study councils or teacher centers would have strong resources; others would have none.	More important than they have often been considered; many are self-help efforts to improve schools.

Table 1-A (continued)

Generic Characteristics of Educational Agencies in a Region that Affect Involvement
in KPD and School Improvement Activities

Agency Type	Characteristics					
	Number	Territorial Range	Heterogeneity	Involvement in KPD/SI	Resources for School Improvement	Centrality for School Improvement
NIE-sponsored regional institutions	Just <u>one</u> !	The RFP prescribed region as modified by the proposer.	Existing agencies vary markedly but have definable structural characteristics.	Central business in KPD and SI; involvement in KP for new regional institutions should be solely to attain SI ends.	The resources are small when juxtaposed against the region to be affected; but they should be stable and committed to SI.	Depends upon the individual effectiveness of the institution and its leadership; could be a significant regional resource.

your agents if you'll address our problems." Under these circumstances they are likely to generate some resources for use in school improvement programs but the bulk of their budgets are locked into personnel who are consumed by their teaching, counseling, advising, administering, student-related roles. They are concerned with school improvement efforts; initiate and work through school improvement projects within their district boundaries; involve themselves beyond these boundaries with agencies and individuals attuned to their needs; expect to be consulted about regional educational efforts; view themselves as politically pivotal agencies -- "where the action is"; are suspicious of experts removed from the scene of the action. Despite the success of NDN in working with local developer-disseminators it is probably the case that most LEA personnel are attuned to local, regional, and state recognition and rewards rather than national audiences. Even if a regional institution reaches the LEA through other agencies, it needs credibility with this "central agency."

Intermediate service agencies. The diversity of these units from state-to-state makes it difficult to comment on them. Where they exist in either a mandated or permissive form they are a bridging agency between the SEA and LEA and/or a specialized form of IOA. Their functions may or may not include major responsibility for KU and school improvement. If they do not, i.e., if they are a form of shared service arrangement, their political and educational significance to the regional institution is probably minor. However, in instances where they have been defined as pivotal in the state's structure for school improvement, e.g., Texas, they may be an agency without which a

regional institution could never address local educational needs. Assuming this school improvement role, the ISAs should be expected to view themselves as the keystone agency in a state's school improvement strategy; sensitive to LEA and state educational needs; budgeted for and possessing personnel and expertise in school improvement; heavily invested in brokering LEA needs; having access to necessary contacts in the KP community. Any regional agency attempting to work in the school improvement area in a region with school improvement-oriented ISAs should anticipate overlapping functions and service areas and considerable suspicion that the redundancy introduced by the regional agency is unnecessary. Surely these ISAs will represent such a rich technical resource, and be in a sufficiently sensitive political position, that their joint involvement with the regional institution is necessary if the latter is to be a significant force in the area.

State education agencies. The SEAs tend to be a clean-cut organization for the regional institution as it considers organizational relationships. SEAs are a political sine qua non for the regional institution in almost every instance. Their service areas overlap with the regional institution. Most of them will already have a reasonably well-explicated school improvement strategy in place. They draw a substantial portion of their school improvement monies from the same sources supporting the regional institution. The SEA possesses constitutional legitimacy; a service area which is politically defined and attuned to effective political action; a strong link to the Federal administrative and legislative agencies; a burgeoning responsibility in KU and school improvement; a pivotal role in dissemination defined by the State Capacity Building Program (SCBP); some legal sanctions over LEAs which

are sufficient to sustain a gatekeeper's role; a proprietary interest in maintaining a position of perceived leadership in school improvement. The primary incentives for SEA involvement with a regional institution would seem to be (a) access to additional project funding, (b) provision of professional growth opportunities for SEA staff, (c) possible increase in SEA visibility as a front running agency in school improvement.

Schools, colleges, and departments of education. Despite the frequency of these agencies in the population of educational institutions, only a few per state would be involved actively in KP or KU. Their political influence varies regionally but would seldom be comparable to either SEAs or LEAs. They may operate agencies which are directly competitive with the regional institution in the form of school study councils, leagues of cooperative schools, field service or research bureaus, and pre- and in-service training programs. Surely a number of their faculty members will be viewed by schools in the region as important resources and may actually be employed by LEAs in a consultative capacity. Twenty-five to fifty SCDEs nationwide will be important KP links for regional institutions and direct use of SCDE resources or personnel may be helpful in carrying out regional institutional projects. In the instance of SCDEs, the regional institutions are not limited in any sense to use resources from within the region. Nationally recognized SCDEs respond to national incentives, i.e., involvement in R and D projects, access to Federal and foundation funds, opportunities for publication. State- and sub-state-oriented SCDEs are more likely to respond to opportunities for involvement in service and dissemination activities. SCDEs are resources that most regional institutions can manipulate with little political risk. However, SCDEs

are direct competitors for funds from the identical Federal agencies which support the regional institutions and should be expected to respond as competitors.

Private KPU agencies. Within any region there will be some private agencies, profit and non-profit, involved chiefly in educational KPU or training activities. Their regional political influence would be typically low. Usually they can free-up personnel only if such staff are covered by contracts or grants. This is a mixed blessing, however, when viewed from the perspective of a regional institution. These agencies frequently have strong professional staffs and their time can be purchased for specific purposes. Only a few such agencies have defined their territory regionally. They are direct competitors for funds with the regional institutions -- a fact attested to by the difficulty encountered by the Council for Educational Development and Research in attempting to attract these agencies to join with existing regional institutions in the Council. Currently, two of them are members.

Publicly-supported KPU agencies. Included in this group are Federal programs such as research coordinating units for vocational education in REAs, regional resource centers for the handicapped and more general Federal KU initiatives such as RDU, RDx, and SCBP. Probably one should also consider Federal projects in the region which are impermanent but of some likely duration, e.g., Teacher Corps projects, or even large research or KU projects. Also included should be state or local initiatives with school improvement ends in mind, e.g., California School Improvement Program. These agencies

are structurally so diverse that it is difficult to describe them meaningfully but they are of substantial importance because their mission overlaps with the regional institution, especially in KU and dissemination. The derivation of the support of many of these units from Federal sources, and of all the units from governmental sources, means that public criticism of unwarranted duplication of effort is likely to be high. School improvement initiatives undertaken with state and local funds will be especially sensitive to moves by the regional institution that can be viewed as "taking the play" away from the locals. Overlapping Federal programs which are operating regionally will trigger concern about which Federal agency receives credit for regional changes. This is a volatile set of agencies with high dependency on external funding; organizational legitimacy in the region which is dependent on that funding; overlapping service areas; high potential to free up KU resources; likely suspicious attitudes toward a comprehensive publicly supported agency which bridges state boundaries and special substantive interests, i.e., which typically has a broader arena of responsibility than the publicly supported agency.

Professional education associations. Local education associations should be considered a subset of this class so unique that they need individual attention. It is simply not possible for regional institutions involved in KPU to consider relationships with LEAs apart from the local association. Explicitly or implicitly they are the gatekeepers of the LEA. And they may themselves be involved in KU activity through a locally-sponsored (perhaps Federally funded) teacher center and/or program or project activities sponsored by the state education association. The local education association may have access indirectly to KU funds through teacher released time or teacher participation in project activity after regular school hours. The teacher pro-

professional associations at the local and state levels will expect to be involved in all KPU initiatives. They will respond favorably, in many instances, to projects or programs which extend recognition to the association and/or teachers directly and which provide formal, structured teacher involvement in KU decision making.

Older-line regional professional associations range from state or regional affiliates of national organizations to regional accrediting associations. Most of them have limited budgets and do not operate KPU programs. They are, however, frequently legitimating agencies.

National professional associations, other than professional teacher associations, seldom involve themselves directly in regional KPU activity. They would most likely intersect with the regional association in legitimating innovations or acting in their conventional dissemination roles through conferences and publications.

Interorganizational arrangements. This category now has to be thought of as "other IOAs" since some of the previous categories are populated with interorganizational arrangements, e.g., a teacher corps project, or a school study council, or, frequently, a teacher center. However, the preceding examples do not begin to account for the IOAs that educational agencies invent, sustain, and support to foster, among other objectives, school improvement ends. As noted in Table 3-A, a preliminary survey of one 13 county area in California unearthed over 100 such arrangements. Typically, those concerned with national planning, tend to over-emphasize the IOAs stimulated by national-level interventions. But it is certainly the case that the KU resources devoted to dissemination and school improvement by non-Federal IOAs in that one

13 county areas in California exceed the resources of any of the existing regional educational laboratories.

The uncertainty with which the authors approach the task of describing IOAs is well-founded. Although they are numerous, they have received almost no empirical investigation. Many have school improvement goals; some operate school improvement programs. Many seem to be self-help organizations, frequently with limited outside support. Their concerns often bridge small geographic areas. They are a complex network which has probably been ignored by most regional institutions. One would guess that a little recognition and reinforcement would go a long way with such arrangements.

An Analysis of KPU Functions by Educational Agencies

Table 3-B returns to the functions posed for the NIE-sponsored regional institutions in Section 1 and attempts to depict a crude profile of how those functions intersect with known functional activities and interests of existing institutions. A word of explanation is necessary to clarify the functions included in the table. Four of the functions noted in Section 1 were dropped because they were intra-institutional or short term in focus and should be irrelevant to the functions of the other specified agencies, i.e.:

1. Maintenance of strong and broadly representative constituent governance and advisory structures;
2. Assistance to NIE through pursuit of mutually defined short term activities;
3. Institutional development through visiting scholar programs and staff development activities;
4. Institutional self-evaluation.

Table 5-B

Current Level of Emphasis on KPI Functions and School Improvement Activities by Educational Agencies

Functions and Activities	Agency Type								
	IEAs	ISAs	SEAs	SCDEs	KPI Agencies Private	Public	Prof. Assoc.	IOAs	Regionals
A. Assessment									
1. Needs assessment	I *	I	C *	I	I	C-P	P *	C-I	C --
2. Ways to solve the region's educational problems	I *	I	C *	P	I	C-S	S-I *	C-I	C --
3. Collaborative planning	I	I	P	P *	I	S-P *	I	C-I	C --
B. KPI activities									
1. R and D based services	P *	S-P	P	S-P	I	C-P *	P-I *	P	C --
2. Dissemination	P *	I	C *	S	I	C-I	C-S *	C-I	C --
3. Training programs	S-P *	I	S *	C *	I	C-I	C-I *	C-I	S --
C. National functions									
1. Dissemination	I	I	P	C *	S	C *	I	P	S --
2. Applied R and D	I	I	P	C *	C	C-S	I	P	S-P --

Key:

Function

C-core

S-secondary

P-peripheral

I-incidental or
idiographic

* indicates the centrality of the relationship between the regional institution and the agency in accomplishing the function whether or not the agency is involved centrally in carrying out the function.

The elimination of these functions from consideration is obviously not a commentary on their importance but on their relevance to the functional analysis, e.g., one might imagine that function one above could be better accomplished if the regional institution understood the points of major intersection of its functions with other agencies but it is not, by definition, an overlapping function.

The remaining functions are grouped into three categories: (a) those that seem to deal with regional analysis or stimulation or facilitation in KU, (b) those that deal with regional production activities, and (c) those that retain a national flavor. For the purpose of the analysis on the succeeding pages, definitions for each of these factors were developed. These definitions are ones that the authors have imposed on the brief notations in the Panel Report about each factor.

A. Assessment

1. Needs assessment and the identification and clarification of problems in the laboratory's region. This function assumes both a priori and continuing efforts at assessment of regional educational needs. The assessment will be accomplished in part by the new regional institutions through the use of governing and advisory structures representative of the region.

2. Exploratory R and D to develop approaches to solving the region's educational problems. This function is seen as analagous to an institutional research function in which the purpose is to discover and experiment with ways that the region could better respond to its problems.

3. Collaborative planning with other R and D performers. This form of collaboration is an effort to mobilize and synergize existing regional R and D resources in planning to complete school improvement work that must be carried out in the region.

B. KPU Activities

1. Provision of R and D based services to practitioners in the laboratory's region; stimulating or sponsoring R and D by other performers where appropriate. This includes actually rendering R and D service or technical assistance (in the mode, e.g., of a bureau of research and field service) and brokering R and D services between other R and D agencies in the region and operating educational agencies.

2. Dissemination (defined broadly to include activities that enhance the impact of the laboratory's and others' R and D). This function includes the responsibility to bring the best that is available in the knowledge production community to the attention of practitioners in the region, especially products that are responsive to their particular educational needs.

3. Sponsorship of training programs. It is assumed that such training programs will be aimed at assisting practitioners in the use of R and D materials to solve their problems either as consumers or active partners in participatory research ventures.

C. National Functions

1. Disseminate the results of their own R and D on a national basis. This function asserts the responsibility of an agency to insure the extra-regional spread of products which they have developed.

2. Conduct applied research and development. The nature of the educational problems explored by regional institutions are not usually region-specific. Therefore activity in this function area is defined as being national as well as regional in scope. These regional institutions are, in the final analysis, part of the nation's R and D resources in education.

To switch the frame of presentation from the preceding section, we will refer very briefly to the agencies as the reader might peruse the columns in the table and then re-examine the functions in somewhat greater detail.

1. LEAs: Column one is not meant to imply that LEAs do not engage, for example, in intra-district needs assessment but rather that regional needs assessment is incidental to their functions. The picture of the LEA emerges as that of an agency of central concern but one in which that centrality exists not because the LEA attempts to function as a vehicle for regional school improvement but because it is the building block for effective local school improvement.

2. ISAs: The picture of the ISA is unfair and incomplete in states where they have been assigned major responsibility for school improvement. This picture describes the ISA as chiefly an agency to facilitate shared personnel and/or services across LEAs. In states where they are used as a central strategy for school improvement, the profile would more closely resemble the column presented in Table 3-B for SEAs.

3. SEAs: The state agencies are central performers in the functions of dissemination and needs assessment. They are critical gatekeepers in most of the function areas.

4. SCDEs: Schools of education are described as agencies with chiefly national concerns since the most influential members of the group strive for a national orientation. They should be able to be used as important partners in collaborative R and D planning and training programs. They are a significant source of KP products for the regional institutions.

5. Private KPU agencies: Except as likely sources for R and D products they will tend to be tangentially involved in regional activities.

6. Public KPU agencies: The diversity of these units suggests that one or more of them will probably be involved centrally in every function area. Surely they will be useful in collaborative planning ventures.

7. Professional associations: If professional teacher associations are to be involved in carrying out a KPU function, it would most likely be either in dissemination or training. They are pivotal political agencies, however, in such areas as needs assessment and providing R and D services to practitioners.

8. IOAs: The range of agencies within this cluster leads simply to the conclusion that, as in the case of public KPU agencies, they are likely to be central to any function area.

Let us examine the rows in Table 3-B.

Needs assessment. Surely the process of regional needs assessment, however approached, requires the involvement of the regularly constituted educational structures of the region (LEAs, SEAs) and the professionals involved in carrying out the educational program (teachers and administrators). Continuous, systematic concern for needs assessment has probably been an on-going activity of the SEAs, some of the LEAs within their district boundaries, and other public KPU agencies and IOAs in the region. This function area should not be approached

as if it were a de novo activity, on the one hand, nor as if it were simply a matter of adding up existing needs assessments on the other. The process of needs assessment is an interesting one because it provides the outward appearance of being a scientific activity when it is probably a political activity directed toward forming the agenda of priorities acceptable to a variety of regional interest groups. These priorities may or may not reflect the personal priorities of individuals residing in the region.

Solution exploration. This appears to be a design function, i.e., inventing strategies and tactics appropriate to the needs assessment. SEAs and other publicly-funded KPU agencies are probably already involved in this endeavor on a broad geographic basis. Schools of education may have useful consultative resources. Professional associations may be pivotal in deciding what is an acceptable solution. Before or after the fact, LEA personnel will determine whether or not a solution is disseminable. The inclination of regional institution leadership in carrying out this function will be to link the solutions to the problems. That is probably a recipe for disappointment. Rather, one should assume that:

- The educational problems of a region are not solved; just addressed, manipulated, sometimes ameliorated.
- There are frequently effective and efficient interventions available to attack low priority problems in a region. One should never overlook the opportunity to do a little good.
- The most difficult problems are ordinarily problems about which we know least. That is why they persist on our problem agendas. There

is no point in attempting to engineer symbolic interventions for overwhelming problems. They should be recognized for what they are -- our continuing concern.

- Problem identification and solution exploration are interactive rather than sequential functions. We need to discover what problems, if any, we can solve. And then do it!

Collaborative planning. The NIE-sponsored regional institution may be the only agency with a designated responsibility to plan collaboratively across the region. That condition is a mixed blessing. On the one hand it demonstrates the utility of the regional institution in picking up a necessary function which is beyond the scope of an existing agency. On the other, it may also demonstrate that the region is so artificial in structure that collaborative planning has not been undertaken because it is essentially irrelevant.

Assuming the former condition, there surely are helper-agencies interested in working on this task. SEAs sometimes undertake collaborative planning ventures among R and D agencies within their boundaries; schools of education occasionally attempt to build bridges between and among R and D performers in their geographic areas; some special IOAs or other public KPU agencies have designated responsibilities in this area, e.g., research coordinating units in vocational education. The orchestration of activities across R and D agencies will probably be well accepted if it is undertaken with a light hand and if it provides opportunities for agencies or agents to come together who are interested in collaborative planning but may not have had the resources previously to meet and work together.

R and D based services. The authors have assumed that this function means both the conduct of applied R and D on specific regional problems, e.g., SEDL's work on the development of bilingual assessment instruments, and participatory research activities with agencies in the region on problems of significance to them. Except for a laboratory-like organization or a publicly-sponsored agency in a special problem area, it is unlikely that any other agency would view such a function as central to its concern. There are, of course, sub-organizational units where this is a focus, e.g., SCDEs have maintained historically bureaus of research and service which have worked on LEA problems -- usually under contract. Some IOAs have been formed with this function in mind, e.g., the Great Lakes Consortium of Colleges undertakes institutional research for its members. This is a promising area in which to work because the demand is high and the supply is low. It is a difficult area in which to work because the demand (from LEAs) quickly depletes the supply.

Before leaving this function area, some mention should be made of participatory research ventures. Increasing interest is being exhibited in revitalizing and refurbishing such concepts as action research in effecting school improvement. The success reported around the involvement of practitioners in the 15,000 Hours study of urban education in Great Britain has excited the interest of urban educators in the United States. The new regional institutions may find that picking up on the theme of participatory research efforts and engaging traditional users and producers in special studies is a way to balance off the supply and demand problem for R and D based services.

Dissemination. Federal program emphases on dissemination have stimulated strong efforts in the field by SEAs and other publicly-sponsored agencies. The

role of existing regional laboratories has been sparked by RDx. The new regional institutions can expect to find a high level of activity in their region; proprietary concern for the area expressed by regional SEAs; and a role which depends to a substantial extent on Federal initiatives in this area. Since the regional institution is unlikely to have the necessary resources to work with LEAs employing linking agents, its role is more likely to be some pattern of complementarity to the existing investments in the region. In particular instances, the regional institution might serve as an effective catalyst to link SCDE personnel with the leadership figures in SEA dissemination programs.

Training programs. Schools of education view themselves as "expert" trainers and will be concerned about any ventures in this category from regional institutions. But little attention has been given to KU training by any agency, even including SCDEs. If the assumption is made that informed practitioners can better utilize R and D findings and join in participatory R and D ventures (may, in fact, be more open to change), the regional institution may be able to discover a role in this function area by stimulating and supporting KU training directed to practitioners. Even though their in-house training capacity may be low, they could work through SEAs, SCDEs, and other publicly supported KPU agencies to increase training opportunities in the region.

National functions. The national functions of disseminating the products of regional institutions to agencies outside the region and conducting applied R and D are treated gingerly in the specification of functions for the ideal

regional institution. Clearly NIE does not view them as central functions for these institutions. However, in examining the history of the current regional laboratories, all of them are engaged in these function areas and this involvement is noted frequently as an evidence of their strength and vitality of institutions.

But that is a separate argument. For the current purpose it is probably sufficient to note that these function areas are unlikely to produce conflictive relationships with regional agencies. The worst that can be said about them is that other regional agencies may view them as detracting from the institution's specific concern for the region; the best is that they may foster credibility and legitimacy for the institution if agencies outside the region are interested in their products.

Conclusions and Inferences

Since this has been a lengthy description of hypothesized relationships between regional institutions and their neighboring educational agencies, let us try to comment upon some of the more important observations and draw a few inferences before turning to the task of using these data to generate recommendations:

- LEAs represent a complex organizational phenomenon for the regional institution. They are the "school improvers"; suspicious of outside experts and innovations; too numerous to work with directly; too significant to treat as simply a target system; interested in involvement in school improvement endeavors but limited in improvement vs. maintenance resources.
- The enlightened self interest characteristic of LEAs can probably be trusted as a guide for planning and decision making by the regional

institution since it tends to reflect the LEAs most pressing problems --a kind of *in situ* needs survey.

- ISAs and IOAs vary so markedly from state-to-state that their relationship to a regional organization is difficult to predict. However, they share in common with the regional organization the fact that they are illegitimate in a constitutional sense, and dependent on how their services or activities are perceived by client educational organizations. This probably inclines them simultaneously to be empathetic to the problems faced by the regional organization in establishing relationships and conducting programs but cautious in working with the regional agency to be certain that joint ventures, if any, result in joint credit.
- If you are beginning to have the feeling that the inter-relationships among educational agencies in a regional territory sound and feel like the probing, negotiating and structuring which goes on as individuals and sub-units within an organization construct their cause maps which define their organizational reality, so do the authors. But the negotiated order we are describing is even looser than the intraorganizational pattern because the organizations involved are for the most part decoupled, not loosely coupled. And to complicate matters further, the connections across organizations when they do exist are defined frequently by individuals and sub-units within the organizations but then labeled as inter-organizational arrangements.
- State education agencies are pivotal allies for the regional organization. Simultaneously they (a) possess some legitimate control over LEAs and SCDEs, (b) are involved directly in school improvement and dissemination functions, (c) use Federal funding sources extensively, (d) house other

Federally-sponsored regional agencies, and (e) are obvious linking agencies from the regional organization to almost all other educational agencies in their respective states.

- Schools of education are resource pools for the regional organization. They tend to house KPU performers and agencies; to have low investment in the region per se; to be politically weak; and to be seeking organizational allies. Although they are direct competitors to the regional organization in the resource pool, their loose coupledness reduces the negative effect of the competition. Because of this organizational "looseness," their personnel resources can be bled off one-by-one rather than through formal organizational agreements, but this strategy obviously weakens a regional institutional capacity.
- Other Federally-sponsored educational institutions are simultaneously natural allies and competitors. They frequently overlap both the resource pool and the service area.
- The burgeoning role of teachers through their local and state associations casts professional teacher organizations in a critical political posture as gatekeepers of school improvement activities. Surely they could exercise a powerful negative effect on the regional organization if they felt their interests and/or the interests of teachers individually were being ignored.
- Much of the attention of those concerned with the impact of regional organizational relationships on new NIE-sponsored regional institutions has centered on individual educational organizations. But these individual agencies have already formed a myriad of IOAs which are significant

in several ways: (a) they frequently address school improvement concerns, (b) they reflect "natural" linkages which should teach the regional organization something about coordination and planning, and (c) they will often be competitors with the regional agency which they will view as a new IOA.

- In the general population census of educational organizations in a region, the NIE-sponsored educational institution is one among very many. This is not to argue that it is insignificant but only that its significance is often magnified by the view from Washington. Its achievements should be considered in balance against its role in the region.
- There are no uncovered functions (or for that matter unserved regions) for the new regional institutions. The regional organization is at best, another strong resource on which its region and the country can draw in achieving school improvement ends. Functional emphases from region to region can only be determined as the regional organization works out its negotiated order within its region.

Summary and Recommendations

A brief summary of the observations made in the preceding pages about the nature of the context in which the new NIE-sponsored regional institutions will develop will be presented below. A set of recommendations will then be made regarding the planning, procurement, monitoring and operating activities to be undertaken around the establishment of these new organizations.

Summary

1. KP, KU, and school improvement activities within each region are already extensive and intensive. All the educational institutions, singly, and collectively, can be assumed to be involved in KPU to some extent; some will be invested heavily.
2. Intra-region expectations for the regional organization will range from modest to non-existent. Many of its potential "partners" will view the regional organization as a competitor.
3. The patterns of inter-relationships and communication among educational agencies in each region are already numerous, complex, and disorderly. An understanding of those relationships is requisite to supplementing or complementing them.
4. Understanding the region means much more than identifying regional "needs" however they are defined. It means having an inventory of KP, KU, and school improvement activities already underway - their strengths and weaknesses; an understanding of the incentives and disincentives which influence agencies and actors in the KPU community: a feel for new or modified activities which are feasible and acceptable; a sense of the intrinsically interesting needs or problems in which individual agencies are willing to invest their resources.

5. Although the experience of existing regional laboratories may be helpful in illuminating problems and conditions which will confront new regional organizations, one should recall the poor record of replicability in building regional institutions. Not only is each regional organization obviously unique, but there also seem to be few defensible generalizations regarding how regional institutions should be organized or operated.

6. The regional organizations will begin life with heavy resource dependency on NIE. It seems safe to predict that the organization will be more tightly coupled initially to its sponsor than to its clients. This should also mean that signals from the sponsor will assume greater amplitude than intended until the resource base is diversified.

7. The new regional organizations are joining a national community of 17 regional and university-based R and D and KU organizations. In view of the tenuousness of their relationships to the arbitrarily defined region in which each will be located, the new regional institutions should be considered simultaneously as KPU/SI resources in the region and the nation. Neither role seems obviously predominant nor subordinate.

8. The new regional institutions will have multiple roles to play in their regions. The complexity of the educational KPU community demands flexibility on the part of these organizations to adopt negotiating, collaborating, supporting, reacting, or coordinating roles if they are to be successful. A unitary stance in regard to organizations in the region will not develop nor can it be designated in advance.

9. The new regional institutions will become viable organizations as their members engage in sense making activities about the nature of the institution.

its membership and its environment. This sense of the institution will be negotiated continuously within the organization for the duration of its existence.

10. The continuous organizing process engaged in by the new institutions as organizations will also occur for the interorganizational relationships in which the institution engages. These will involve sense making across organizational boundaries and the continuous negotiation of the nature of the inter-organizational relationship.

11. The nature of the educational KPU community is so complex and so variable that inter-region variability of KPU roles for various educational agencies will be high. In some states ISAs are critical to school improvement; in others they are irrelevant. This variability will directly affect the patterns of development of the different regional institutions in establishing interorganizational linkages.

Recommendations

On planning and plans.

1. Little effective substantive planning can occur prior to the initiation of the regional institution's actual activities in the region. The proposers should be encouraged to de-emphasize substantive plans and emphasize the process of planning itself - how the regional institution will proceed with its planning tasks.

2. Up-front planning varies in its credibility by the complexity of the planning task. Short term R and D projects can often be judged on the basis of the adequacy of the plan to carry out the research. Surely this is not the case for the new regional institutions. Trial and error will play a major part

in determining both substantive directions and interrelationships with other regional educational agencies. Assuming reasonable prudential concerns have been accounted for in the proposal, plans (or wishful promises) should play a minor role in evaluating the proposal in contrast to strength of personnel, sensitivity to working in an interorganizational mode in the designated region, and a realistic understanding of the metes and bounds of regional institutional programs and achievements.

3. There should be no initial planning grant period. However, there should be a brief (6-9 month) period of initiatory operations during which time the regional institution's leadership should be expected to:

- a) Meet basic logistical needs in terms of space and formal governance arrangements.
- b) Recruit vigorously.
- c) Continue meeting and talking with interested educators and laymen in the region.
- d) Initiate 2 or 3 or 4 short term operational activities on which the new staff can test out its potential in the region.

The result of the initiatory period should not be a more elegant proposal to do something in the future but a better understanding and description of what is possible in the region.

4. NIE should abandon the concept of planning grants and planning periods for its regionally-sponsored institutions. The very terminology prejudices the image of planning as a comprehensive, goal-driven, a priori activity. Planning is a continuous management function and should be treated as other

management functions are treated, i.e., as an evolving, regularized program of activities to be monitored and assessed as it contributes, or fails to contribute, to organizational outcomes.

In the process of procurement.

1. NIE needs to frame the RFP in such a way that it recognizes the on-going regional activity in KP, KU, and school improvement and calls for complementary, coordinative, stimulatory roles for the regional organization.

2. The regional organization should be provided with funds and contracting authority to reduce competition between itself and other regional agencies and to facilitate the use of incentives for cooperative activity, e.g., mini-grants for SCDE personnel in R and D; NDN-like grants to LEA developer-disseminators; funding to support travel by key SEA planners to regional meetings.

3. The RFP should encourage the regional institution to experiment with an array of functions and roles appropriate to its region instead of constraining involvement in such function areas as, for example, development or applied R and D. The emphasis should be placed on a search for what works well in the region.

4. The concept of regionalism in the designation of the institution's responsibilities should be placed in perspective, i.e., no one expects the regional institution to become the key agency in the region in school improvement nor to solve the region's educational problems. The solicitation is designed to produce an effective R and D and school improvement agency which can serve as a resource in a given region of the country and take its place among the expanding network of national KPU agencies with special relationships to NIE.

In monitoring/operations.

1. Learning about the region is a joint regional organization/NIE activity. It will require trial and error efforts, negotiation and patience. Quick payoff demands on the regional institutions will push them into conservative, low priority areas of activity.

2. Initial evaluation efforts should focus on an assessment of functions and roles rather than of the regional institution: what's working and failing and why.

3. If the regional institution is expected to be responsive to regional concerns and make its way as a major KPU resource, it will require responsive patterns of evaluation. The monitor will have to believe that the regional institution is in the process of organizing.

4. The varying circumstances confronting the regional organization over time and the fact that it and its sponsor are learning as it is evolving suggests that every effort should be made to blur the distinctions often drawn among procurement, planning, monitoring, negotiating, and evaluating.

In general.

1. NIE should exercise special caution in its early relationships with these institutions because signals will predictably be taken too seriously by the institutions while they are dependent almost exclusively on NIE for funding.

2. These institutions provide a unique opportunity to learn about school improvement, the educational change process, and the use of interorganizational arrangements in school improvement. At least one of these regional organizations should be documented from the day of its inception to add to the little that is known about the process of cross-organizational sensemaking and development in education.

References

- Benson, J. K. The interorganizational network as a political economy. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1975, 20, 229-249.
- Cates, C. S., McKibbin, S., & Hart, B. Organizational and interorganizational arrangements and linkages for dissemination and utilization: Preliminary analysis report. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory, January, 1980.
- Derthick, M. Between state and nation: Regional organizations of the United States. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1974.
- Levine, S. & White, P. E. Exchange as a conceptual framework for the study of interorganizational relationships. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1961, 5, pp. 583-601.
- Research and development centers and regional educational laboratories: Strengthening and stabilizing a national resource. Final report of the Panel for the Review of Laboratory & Center Operations. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Education, January, 1979.
- Should NIE establish new regional R and D institutions? The issues. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Education, 1980.
- Weick, K. E. The social psychology of organizing (2nd edition). Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979.
- Zeitz, G. Interorganizational dialectics. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1980, 25, pp. 72-88.

Reference Notes

1. Long-term special institutional agreements with the seventeen existing laboratories and centers. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Education, January 15, 1979.
2. Weick, K. E. Loosely coupled systems: Relaxed meanings and thick interpretations. Unpublished manuscript, Cornell University, 1980.